

**Remarks Given By  
Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman  
June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Vincennes, IN  
Advancing Women in Business Seminar**

Good morning! It's great to be here with you today at this exciting seminar – Advancing Women in Business – I can feel the energy in the room!

The Governor and I enjoy taking state government on the road and meeting Hoosiers where they live. I've had the pleasure of being in this region of our state many times. I remember very well the experience of participating in reenactment of the capture of Ft. Sackville and joining in the grand opening of the Red Skeleton Performing Arts Center. That was a lot of fun – and I had a great chance to see the rich Hoosier History we have in this part of the state.

Any time I travel, it's usually the business folks who are there to greet me when I arrive. So I want to thank you for your hospitality – just knowing that there are friendly faces and welcoming handshakes at the end of a few hours in the Tahoe makes the trip that much more enjoyable.

As I've traveled all over the state, I've met some remarkable people. Many of them are women, like you – motivated, forward-thinking entrepreneurs. I'm honored to represent you as Lt. Governor, and I appreciate the work you are doing to improve your lives and your communities. You are tremendous partners in our efforts to move Indiana forward and make it an even better place to work and live. I hope you will come away from today's discussion with some useful information and a renewed passion for your work.

Governor Daniels and I see entrepreneurial success as a sign of a thriving economy. I hope the conference we've put together will help you, as entrepreneurs, to strengthen your businesses. I think it's very important that our businesswomen, whether up-and-coming or looking for new ways to grow, have the opportunity to learn from Indiana's female trailblazers. The women we've brought in to speak to you have a wide range of experience. Some own clothing boutiques, and computer companies, and others work in laboratory services, and construction companies. There is something here for everyone.

When I talk to women like you, women who are leaders in their fields, I hear a common refrain. They think they have to be over-qualified in order to succeed. When I talk to men who are in similar positions, I hear a different tune. To their credit, they think they were born qualified.

It's very interesting to hear the two sexes describe their own competence to lead and succeed. I think everyone can relate to that sense of being the underdog and needing to prove themselves.

## **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**

I am, from time to time, the only skirt in a room full of suits, and I know the challenges women face in responding to the call to leadership. Thankfully though, we live in a country and a culture that appreciates women leaders.

A few months ago, I traveled to Taiwan and Vietnam, leading a trade mission for the state. It was a great trip, and I came home very aware of the differences between our cultures. I walked into a meeting with some of their top leaders one day and saw that my name plate read "Mr. Becky Skillman." They certainly weren't expecting ME. But it drove home the point that not everyone expects a woman to lead.

In Indiana, we have a responsibility to ourselves and to our daughters, our nieces, and all the young women of the next generation—to step up and do what President Kennedy called us to do years ago. He said, "It is time for a new generation of leadership, to cope with new problems and new opportunities. For there is a new world to be won."

A rejuvenated Indiana is our new world. And we have the leaders, entrepreneurs, volunteers and forward-thinkers who will mold the future right here in our presence today.

Leadership is not unique to any one group of people, any one sex or any one age group. Leadership is about action, not position. The challenges we face – age, experience, sex, race – make us work harder and learn more. They develop our character.

I enjoy spending time with local leaders like you. You are the people who are driving change in our communities. You are the ones who are not afraid of the work that is required to keep Indiana's economic engine running. As women, you have a unique perspective on that. Any good business person

would tell you that a diversified economy is a thriving economy – and entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of a diversified economy!

As female entrepreneurs, you bring something special to the field. It's a different kind of diversity – not economic, but social. I am so proud of the contributions Hoosier women are making to Indiana's economic comeback. I want to thank you for rising to the challenge and seeking new opportunities.

It's been said that opportunity is often been missed because it shows up on your doorstep dressed in overalls and looks like work! But I have met very few Hoosiers who balk at hard work.

I'm a Hoosier – born and bred. I grew up in rural Lawrence County, surrounded by farmers and small business, and I know first-hand the value and the challenge of hard work. Success requires a commitment to excellence and diligence. And for some reason, there is a thrill in it, isn't there? Don't you love your work? The reward of the challenge is satisfying. I think Hoosiers were born to work and we do it well. Even though it's not easy, we all know it's usually the hard stuff that is most worth doing. We all serve our friends and neighbors in different ways.

For the Governor and me, it is every policy – every attempt to be more efficient – every action we take leads to better jobs, better business and better futures for Hoosiers. For ALL Hoosiers.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

There are more than 6 million people in Indiana – and it's our job – mine, the Governor's and the administration's – to serve every one of them. That's why our focus, from day one, has been Indiana's economic comeback. In order for that comeback to be complete, it has to include YOU.

Don't worry – we don't operate under any delusions that state government can swoop in and make everything perfect. We know that government can't create prosperity. But, it can create an environment where YOU can create prosperity.

When we assumed office, we made it our mission to create a business-friendly environment and bring in new jobs. Rebuilding Indiana's economy is our driving force. And we have made progress in every region of the state.

Thirty years ago, Hoosier incomes were on par with the rest of the country. You could go to work in Indiana and expect to make the same wage as anyone else in America. Today, our people earn only 90 cents on the dollar. That's not good enough.

We want to make our state the long-term choice for investors – so that all Hoosiers will have more jobs and better jobs. So our children will have the kinds of opportunities that will keep them in Indiana to raise their own families and build their own businesses. We have a long road ahead of us, and our goal is still a long way off – but Indiana's comeback has begun.

In the past month, I have been on the road a lot – mostly to help businesses announce expansions and investment. I was in Remington for a new Advance Auto Parts distribution center announcement. I was in Bedford for the GM expansion. And Ft. Wayne, I talked to a very interesting company that is contemplating bringing an on-demand air taxi service to our state – and opening the highway-in-the-sky, as yet another infrastructure improvement.

Companies are consistently turning to Hoosiers to meet their needs for growth. With every new month, a dozen more deals are sealed, and new jobs are pouring in. Our state's economic development corporation is helping Indiana compete and win. These days, when Indiana competes with other states for jobs, we win nine times out of ten.

We want businesses – large and small – to find the perfect place to grow in Indiana. Because a healthy, thriving economy opens doors of opportunity for us all. That includes the thousands of Hoosier women who are taking risks and creating wealth. Indiana's women-owned businesses are contributing more and more to our economy every day. And we need the diversity they bring to the table. We also need your leadership – leadership by example.

## **MENTORS**

I don't know how you got your start in your company. I imagine most of you have worked our way up, the good old fashioned way.

When I was getting my start in politics and government in 1976, I was largely on my own. There simply were no other women at high levels there to guide me. I never lacked the inspiration of a mentor though – there may not have been anyone to show me the ropes, but I had someone back home that gave me the courage to try the ropes out on my own. That was my grandfather. He always taught me that I was a competent person and that I could take a challenge.

From the time I was very young, Grandpa always spoke to me on his level, like an adult. He had a keen interest in politics and government. He was a disciplined, loyal man, godly and smart. I learned to expect respect from him, and I learned to expect respect from other people. It never occurred to me that I couldn't or shouldn't run for public office at the ripe old age of 25. My Grandfather taught me that I was just as qualified as anyone else.

He mentored me. He took the time to listen...to teach...to inspire me to achieve my goals throughout my life. And, I want to encourage you – if you aren't already doing it – to make time for the young women who are coming up the ranks behind you. They need your encouragement and your experience.

Hoosier women – young and old – have proven time and again their potential for greatness. It's our responsibility to help the next generation see that potential and run with it!

## **CONCLUSION**

Indiana is so full of opportunity for you. We see evidence of that every day. I'm sure there's not a woman in this room that wasn't cheering for Angela Braly as she became CEO of Wellpoint. She's the ONLY female CEO of a Fortune 50 company and she's right here in Indiana. What an inspiration!

I think the key to that kind of success is simple. Mrs. Braly did not jump out of college and land at the pinnacle of a major corporation. She worked hard to get where she is today. Like every successful Hoosier – man or woman – she was diligent with the task in front of her. We can all learn from her example – and the examples of the fine women who are leading our discussion today. They have earned their success through many different experiences – some learned business by doing, others have advanced business degrees – but be sure of one thing. They all did the work.

So I suppose the questions posed today might be: are you willing to do the work? Are you willing to treat even the smallest task with excellence? Diligence in the small, will lead us to the great, one success at a time. Indiana is a new world, ladies! I invite you to be a leader today, to take the opportunities that are knocking on your door – especially the ones that look like work.

Thanks for having me today.